

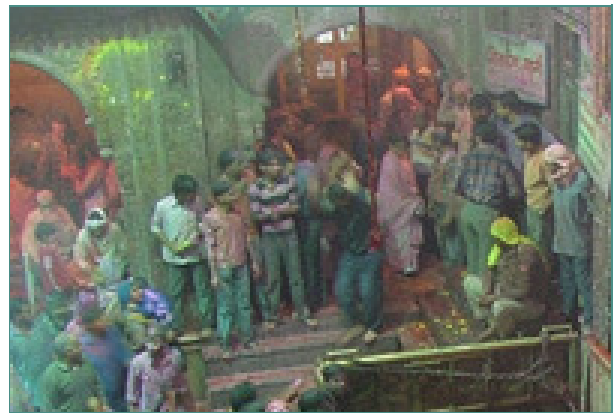
Holi

Holi is a festival celebrated in north India. It marks the coming of Spring, usually in March.

Celebrations

Some families hold religious ceremonies, but for many Holi is more a time for fun than religious observance.

Holi is a colourful festival, with dancing, singing, and throwing of powder paint and coloured water.



Bonfires are lit and roasting grains, pop corn, coconut and chick peas are thrown on by Hindu families

The next day, people of all ages go into the streets for fun and paint-throwing. Everyone gets involved - with no distinctions between caste, class, age or gender.

Hindus have fun by smearing each other with paint and throwing coloured water at each other, all done in a spirit of celebration

Religious story

Holi also celebrates **Krishna**, and the legend of **Holika and Prahlad**.

Some believe the origin of the festival lies with Krishna who was very mischievous as a young boy and threw coloured water over the gopis (milkmaids) This developed into the practical jokes and

games of Holi.

The story of Prahlad is seen to symbolise good overcoming evil and is why traditionally bonfires are lit at Holi.

Prahlad was a prince. His father, the king wanted everyone in his kingdom to worship him. But Prahlad refused and worshipped Lord Vishnu instead. The king's sister Holika, who was supposed to be immune to fire, tricked her nephew Prahlad into sitting on her lap in a bonfire in order to destroy him. But because she was using her powers for evil, the plan failed and Prahlad emerged from the fire unharmed, while Holika was devoured by the flames.

In some parts of India effigies of Holika are burnt on the fire. Ashes from Holi bonfires are thought to bring good luck.